

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) A wastewater treatment apparatus, ~~comprising which~~ comprises:

(1) an obligatory anaerobic tank which operates under the conditions in which a redox potential in a liquid, if this potential is used as an index, is usually -200 mV or less when the pH in the liquid is 7, for bringing wastewater containing a nitrogen-containing dye into contact with sulfate-reducing bacteria under obligatory anaerobic conditions,

(2) a nitrification tank for bringing the wastewater into contact with nitrifying bacteria under aerobic conditions, and

(3) a denitrification tank for bringing the wastewater into contact with denitrifying bacteria under anaerobic conditions.

Claim 2. (Currently Amended) A ~~The~~ wastewater treatment apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the obligatory anaerobic tank, the denitrification tank and the nitrification tank are disposed in ~~the~~ this order of mention through which wastewater flows for treatment and a portion of the treated water discharged from the nitrification tank is ~~caused to return~~ returned and ~~circulate~~ circulated to the denitrification tank.

Claim 3. (Currently Amended) A ~~The~~ wastewater treatment apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the obligatory anaerobic tank, the denitrification tank and the nitrification tank are disposed in ~~the~~ this order of mention through which wastewater flows for treatment and a re-

aeration tank for bringing BOD decomposing bacteria into contact with the wastewater under aerobic conditions is disposed downstream of the denitrification tank.

Claim 4. (Currently Amended) A wastewater treatment apparatus, wherein which
comprises:

a denitrification tank for bringing wastewater containing a nitrogen-containing dye into contact with sulfate reducing bacteria and denitrifying bacteria under obligatory anaerobic conditions; and

a nitrification tank for bringing the wastewater into contact with nitrifying bacteria under aerobic conditions in the order of mention in this stated sequence of the tanks, whereby a portion of the treated water discharged from the nitrification tank is ~~caused to return~~ returned and ~~circulate~~ circulated to the denitrification tank.

Claim 5. (Currently Amended) A The wastewater treatment apparatus of Claim 1, wherein, in at least one of the obligatory anaerobic tank, the nitrification tank and the denitrification tank, the bacteria therein are ~~have been~~ immobilized by on a microorganism immobilization support ~~in at least one tank selected from the obligatory anaerobic tank, the nitrification tank and the denitrification tank.~~

Claim 6. (Currently Amended) A The wastewater treatment apparatus of Claim 3, wherein, in at least one of the obligatory anaerobic tank, the nitrification tank, the denitrification tank and the re-aeration tank, the bacteria therein are ~~have been~~ immobilized by on a microorganism immobilization support ~~in at least one tank selected from the obligatory anaerobic tank, the nitrification tank, the denitrification tank and the re-aeration tank.~~

Claim 7. (Currently Amended) A The wastewater treatment apparatus of Claim 4, wherein, in at least one of the nitrification tank and the denitrification tank, the bacteria therein are have been immobilized by on a microorganism immobilization support in at least one tank selected from the nitrification tank and the denitrification tank.

Claim 8. (Currently Amended) A The wastewater treatment apparatus of Claim 5, wherein the microorganism immobilization support is at least one support selected from the group consisting of a gelled support, a plastic support and a fibrous support.

Claim 9. (Currently Amended) A The wastewater treatment apparatus of Claim 8, wherein the gelled support is a polyvinyl alcohol hydrogel.

Claim 10. (Currently Amended) A method of treating wastewater containing a nitrogen-containing dye, which comprises the following steps of (1) to (3):

(1) ~~an obligatory anaerobic step for bringing the~~ contacting wastewater containing a nitrogen-containing dye ~~into contact~~ with sulfate reducing bacteria under obligatory anaerobic conditions;

(2) ~~a nitrification step for bringing the~~ contacting the aerated wastewater ~~into contact~~ with nitrifying bacteria under anaerobic conditions; and

(3) ~~a denitrification step for bringing the~~ contacting the wastewater ~~into contact~~ with denitrifying bacteria under anaerobic conditions.

Claim 11. (New) The method according to Claim 10, which further comprises, contacting the wastewater from the denitrification tank with BOD decomposing bacteria under aerobic conditions in a re-aeration tank.

Claim 12. (New) The method according to Claim 10, wherein, in at least one of the obligatory anaerobic tank, the nitrification tank and the denitrification tank, the bacteria therein are immobilized on a microorganism immobilization support.

Claim 13. (New) The method according to Claim 11, wherein, in at least one of the obligatory anaerobic tank, the nitrification tank, the denitrification tank and the re-aeration tank, the bacteria therein are immobilized on a microorganism immobilization support.

Claim 14. (New) The method according to Claim 10, wherein, in at least one of the nitrification tank and the denitrification tank, the bacteria therein are immobilized on a microorganism immobilization support.

Claim 15. (New) The method according to Claim 12, wherein the microorganism immobilization support is at least one support selected from the group consisting of a gelled support, a plastic support and a fibrous support.

Claim 16. (New) The method according to Claim 15, wherein the gelled support is a polyvinyl alcohol hydrogel.

Claim 17. (New) A method of treating wastewater containing a nitrogen-containing dye, which comprises the following steps of (1) to (4):

(1) contacting wastewater containing a nitrogen-containing dye with sulfate reducing bacteria under obligatory anaerobic conditions in an obligatory anaeration tank;

(2) contacting the aerated wastewater with denitrifying bacteria under anaerobic conditions in a denitrification tank;

(3) contacting the denitrified wastewater with nitrifying bacteria under aerobic conditions in a nitrification tank thereby producing a treated wastewater; and

(4) recirculating a portion of the treated wastewater to the denitrification tank.

Claim 18. (New) The method according to Claim 17, which further comprises, contacting the wastewater from the denitrification tank with BOD decomposing bacteria under aerobic conditions in a re-aeration tank.

Claim 19. (New) The method according to Claim 17, wherein, in at least one of the obligatory anaerobic tank, the nitrification tank and the denitrification tank, the bacteria therein are immobilized on a microorganism immobilization support.

Claim 20. (New) The method according to Claim 18, wherein, in at least one of the obligatory anaerobic tank, the nitrification tank, the denitrification tank and the re-aeration tank, the bacteria therein are immobilized on a microorganism immobilization support.

Claim 21. (New) The method according to Claim 17, wherein, in at least one of the nitrification tank and the denitrification tank, the bacteria therein are immobilized on a microorganism immobilization support.

Claim 22. (New) The method according to Claim 21, wherein the microorganism immobilization support is at least one support selected from the group consisting of a gelled support, a plastic support and a fibrous support.

Claim 23. (New) The method according to Claim 22, wherein the gelled support is a polyvinyl alcohol hydrogel.